

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ROME 12683

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT TAKES OFFICE; BACKGROUND TO
ELECTION

REF: ROME 12564

SUMMARY. ALESSANDRO PERTINI TOOL THE OATH OF OFFICE
JULY 9 AS THE SEVENTH PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN
REPUBLIC. ELECTED WITH THE WIDEST MAJORITY IN THE
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HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC, PERTINI DELIVERED AN
INAUGRAL MESSAGE WHICH WAS WELL RECEIVED BY
PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE PRESS ALIKE. PERTINI RE-
EMERGED AS A VIABLE POLITICAL CANDIDATE FOLLOWING
AN ELECTORAL DEADLOCK CONDITIONED BY THE FAILURE
OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO REACH A CONSENSUS ON A
CANDIDATE WHO COULD RECEIVE BROAD POLITICAL SUPPORT. THE

FINAL DRAMA WAS MOSTLY PALYED OUT AMONG THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) WHOSE LEADERSHIP WAS FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF TRYING TO RESOLVE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN A MANNER THAT DID NOT UNRAVEL THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK AND CAUSE THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT TO FALL. FOLLOWING A JULY 7 DC DIRECTORATE MEETING IN WHICH THE CANDIDACY OF PERTINI WAS ENDORSED, A LONG AND ASCORBIC DEBATE TOOK PLACE AMONG THE DC ELECTORS. THE FINAL RESULT WAS A VICTORY FOR PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI, ALTHOUGH IT WAS A BITTER ONE, AND THE JARRING DEBATE WHICH SURROUNDED IT NOETHELESS SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE THAT MIGHT BREAK INTO THE OPEN AT THE PARTY'S NEXT NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING NOW SLATED FOR THE END OF JULY. IN ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS, PERTINI REJECTED PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S OFFER TO TENDER HIS GOVERNMENT'S RESIGNATION. THUS PRESERVING. AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TERM, THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENT.

1. NEW PRESIDENT RECEIVES BROAD SUPPORT. ITALY'S SEVENTH PRESIDENT, ALESSANDRO PERTINI, TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE ON SUNDAY, JULY 9, IN A WARMLY APPLAUDED CEREMONY AT THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. HE WAS ELECTED WITH THE WIDEST MAJORITY IN THE HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC--ALL BUT THE RIGHT-WING DEMOCRAZIA NAZIONALE AND NEW-FASCIST MSI VOTED FOR HIM. CONFIDENTIAL

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AFTER LISTENING TO HIS INAUGURAL MESSAGE, HOWEVER, EVEN MSI LEADER ALIMARANTE SAID: "HE FORCED US TO APPLAUD HIM." IN HIS BRIEF BUT MOVING INAUGURAL ADDRESS, PERTINI EVOKED THE THEMES OF LIBERTY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC ORDER. EVEN IF ALL THE REFORMS THAT WERE NEEDED (PERTINI MENTIONED THE RIGHT TO A JOB, PROPER HOUSING AND HEALTH CARE) COULD BE OBTAINED, HE WOULD REFUSE THEM IF THEY CAME AT THE PRICE OF LIBERTY. "LIBERTY CANNOT BE BARTERED", HE SAID. HE ALSO SAID THE THE REPUBLIC MUST BE "JUST AND UNCORRUPT" SO THAT ITS CITIZENS WOULD REGARD IT AS A "MOTHER AND NOT A CRUEL STEP-MOTHER." TO MANY, PERTINI SOUNDED A WELCOME CALL TO THE OLD-FASHIONED VALUES OF PATRIOTISM, A THEME RARELY HEARD IN RECENT YEARS. OTHERS NOTED, HOWEVER, PERTINI'S FREQUENT REFERENCES TO SOCIALIST VALUES, INCLUDING A PERSONAL NOTE OF HOMAGE TO FORMER CELL-MATES SUCH AS AMENDOLA AND THE PCI'S FOUNDING FATHER GRAMSCI ("MY UNFORGETTABLE PRISON COMPANION"). BY SEPTEL, WE ARE FORWARDING THE FULL TEXT OF PERTINI'S ADDRESS.

2. PERTINI'S ELECTION WAS ALSO WIDELY AND

ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSED BY THE PRESS. AND APPARENTLY BY PUBLIC OPINION AS WELL. THE NEW PRESIDENT'S RECORD AS AN ANTI-FACIST, A RESISTANCE HERO, AND ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE REPUBLIC IS FREQUENTLY CITED. HIS REPUTATION FOR HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IS HERALDED. EVEN CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL OBSERVER INDRO MONTANELLI CALLED PERTINI "THE RIGHT MAN IN THE RIGHT PLACE." AS A PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL UNITY, POLITICIANS ARE CONGRATULATING THEMSELVES ON THE WISDOM OF THEIR CHOICE.

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3. BACKGROUND TO PERTINI'S ELECTION.

3. LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS PRIOR TO HIS ELECTION, HOWEVER, PERTINI'S CANDIDACY HAD BEEN REJECTED, WITHDRAWN AND DISCARDED. THE DC HAD VETOED PERTINI AS HAVING BEEN PROPOSED BY THE PSI AND SUPPORTED BY THE PCI AS A CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT. A COLLEGIAL MEETING OF PARTY SECRETARIES HAD ENDED ON JULY 6 IN COMPLETE DIS-

AGREEMENT. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO ATTEMPT AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF PERTINI'S ELECTION (OUR PARLIAMENTARIAN SOURCES HAVE DESERTED ROME AN MASSE AFTER 2 WEEKS OF VOTING AND MANEUVERING), INFORMED
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ACCOUNTS HAVE SHED ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON HOW PERTINI CAME TO BE POLITICALLY RESURRECTED. WITH THE POLITICAL PARAMETERS SET BY THE SOCIALISTS (WHO MAINTAINED THEIR FIRM INSISTANCE ON A PSI CANDIDATE) AND THE COMMUNISTS(WHO STUCK WITH A LEFT CANDIDATE FOR FEAR OF ALIENATING ANF THE OF ITS OWN MEMBERSHIP), THE PSI DRAMA WAS MOSTLY PLAYED OUT IN THE DC.

4. THE JULY 6 PARTY SECRETARIES MEETING HAD REPORTEDLY BEEN EXTREMELY BITTER. PSI LEADER CRAXI AND PRI SECRETARY BIASINI HAD VIRTUALLY COME TO BLOWS. CRAXI AHD REPORTEDLY TAKEN THE POSITION THAT UNLESS THE PARTIES AGREED ON A PSI PRESIDENT IN THE CURRENT PARLIAMENTRY MAJORITY. LATER,ON THE FOLLOWING DAY,, LA MALFA WAS TO WRITE A LETTER VETOING GIOLITTI'S CANDIDACY (CRAXI'S PREFERRED CHOICE) IN TERMS THAT MADE CLEAR THAT THE PRI WOULD OPT OUT SHOULD THE DC THROW ITS WEIGHT BEHIND GIOLITTI.

5. LEFT PARTIES CONDITION DC CHOICES.
THE DC LEADERSHIP WAS THUS FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF TRYING TO RESOLVE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN A MANNER THAT DID NOT UNRAVEL THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK AND CAUSE THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT TO FALL.WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH BLUFFWAS CONTAINED IN CRAXI'S AND LA MALFA'S POSITIONS. THE DC, AT ANY RATE, TOOK BOTH WITH DEAD SERIOUSNESS. ACCORDING TO SOME ACCOUNTS, IT MADE A LAST EFFORT TO SOUND OUT THE PCI INFORMALLY ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A DC "COMPROMISE" CANDIDATE. THE WORK WAS REPORTEDLY NEGATIVE; THE PCI REGARDED ITSELF TOO FIRMLY COMMITTED TO A CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT IN ORDER TO SWITCH. THE CHOICE SEEMED TO BE
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GIOLITTI (FAVORED BY CRAXI) AT THE COST OF ALIENATING THE REPUBLICANS, OR LA MALFA, A CANDIDACY THAT WOULD PROVKE A SOCIALIST WALKOUT.

6. DC "RECYCLES" PERTINI AS CANDIDATE OF NATIONAL UNITY.

6. WITH THE DC LEADERSHIP SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION THAT WOULD AVOID A SEARING PSI-PRI SPLIT, CRAXI REPORTEDLY PLAYED FOR BROKE, TAKING AN INITIATIVE THAT COMPELLED THE DC TO ACT IMMEDIATELY. ACCORDING TO AN INFORMED ACCOUNT TO ABSTAIN ON SATURDAY' VOTE (I.E. CONTINUE TO TEMPORIZE), THE PSI WOULD PROVOKE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS. EARLY THAT AFTERNOON, THE DC DIRECTOATE MET TO CONSIDER THE OPTIONS. UNWILLING TO BREAK WITH THE PRI OR PSI, NO ONE SPOKE IN FAVOR OF LA MALFA OR GIOLITTI. THE NAMEOF PERTINI THUS RE-EMERGED--THE ONE SOCIALIST THAT THE PRI HAD NOT VETOED. PERTINI HAD TO BE "RECYCLED," HOWEVER, THE DC DIRECTORATDE STATEMENT CALLED FOR THE ELECTION OF A LAY CANDIDATE WHO WOULD AVOID "DESTABILIZING" THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK BUT WHO WOULD ALSO BE "FREE OF ANY PRECONSITUTED CONDITIONING., SINCE PERTINI HAD WITHDRWAN HIS OEN CNNDIDACY, THE DC FELT FREE TO NOMINATE PERTINI AS A PRESIDENT OF UNITY AND CONSENSUS, AND NO LONGER THE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT. ALTHOUGH BARTOLOMEI

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(FANFANIANO) REPORTEDLY OBJECTED THAT HIS WAS
AN ODD WAY TO SELECT A PRESIDENT, THE DIRECTORATE
UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED THE HOBSON'S CHOICE.

7. RESISTANCE OF DC ELECTORS OVERCOME-BUT WITH DIFFICULTY.
ZACCAGNINI THENHAD TO FACE THE DC PARLIAMENTAR-
IANS AND REGIONAL SUPPORTERS OF GIOLITTI (THOSEWHO
FAVORED A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CRAXI) AND LA MALFA
(THOSE WHO MAY HAVE HOPED TO ELECT A DC PRESIDENT
BY CANCELLING OUT THE LAY CADIDIATES). THE DIVISION
WAS ALL THE MORE COMPLICATED BECAUSE IT DID NOT
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FOLLOW FACTIONAL PARTY LINES. ASKED BY ACCAGNINI
TO SUPPORT OTHER PARTIES, THE DEBATE WAS ASCERBIC AND
PROLONGED (OVER FIVE HOURS AND LASTING UNTIL EARLY
SATURDAY MORNING). ALTHOUGH IT IS CUSTOMARY TO
VOTE BY SECRET BALLOT, ZACCAGNINI APPARENTLY CON-
SIDERED IT TOO RISKY. HE THEREFORE ASKED FOR A
VOTE BY ACCLAMATION, SAYING HE WOULD RESIGN AS
PARTY SECRETARY SHOULD HE FAIL TO RECEIVE A MAJORITY.

8. THE RESULT WAS A VICTORY FOR ACCAGNINI, BUT
CERTAINLY A BITTER ONE. HOWEVER, NEARLY A
HUNDRED OTHERS WALKED OUT (THE FANFANIANI, IN PARTICULAR),
GIVING ZACCAGNINI A DISQUIETINGLY LOW LEVEL OF SUPPORT
(60 PERCENT) IN THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS. ONE
OF THOSE WHO VOTED AGAINST (SEGNI) COMMENTED THAT
THE VOTE MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE "EXPLICIT
REJECTION, HOWEVER, TO CHARACTERIZE THOSE WHO ABSTAINED OR
VOTED AGAINST ZACCAGNINI. SOME LIKE SEGNI, MAZZOTTA,
AND BIANCO REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THE CHOICE OF LA MALFA;
OTHERS LIKE GARGANIA (LEFT-WING BASE) FOR DIAMETRICALLY
OPPOSING REASONS OBJECTED TO DC SUPPORT OF ANY PSI
CANDIDATE SINCE THIS WOULD ENHANCE CRAXI'S "AUTONOMIST"
POLICIES. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FANFANI, HOWEVER, ALL OF THE
DC'S FACTIONAL HEADS VOTED TO SUPPORT ZACCAGNINI'S
POSITION. THE JARRING JULY 7-8 DEBATE NONETHELESS
SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE THAT
MIGHT BREAK INTO THE OPEN AT THE PARTY'S NEXT NATIONAL
COUNCIL MEETING, NOW SLATED FOR THE END OF JULY.

9. SELECTION OF PERTINI PRESERVES POLITICAL FRAMEWORK.
THE DC ASSEMBLY VOTE CLEARED THE WAY FOR PERTINI'S
ELECTION ON JULY 8. WITH THE DC ON BOARD, PERTINI WAS

ABLE TO RECEIVE THE SUPPORT OF ALL POLITICAL GROUPINGS
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FROM THE FAR LEFT TO THE CONSERVATIVE LIBERALS.
SATURDAY'S VOTE WAS THUS REDUCED TO A RITUALISTIC EXERCISE.
IN COMING DAYS, WE WILL BE SEEKING POLITICAL REACTIONS
TO PERTINI'S ELECTION. IF MANY ELEMENTS ARE STILL
UNCLEAR, THE UNDERLYING DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THE
PRESENT POLITICAL FRAMEWORK IS EVIDENT. ONE OF THE FIRST
ACTS OF PERTINI'S PRESIDENCY WAS THUS THE FORMALISTIC
REJECTION OF ANDREOTTI'S OFFER TO TENDER HIS
GOVERNMENT'S RESIGNATION. AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT
TERM, THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN
PRESERVED.GARDNER

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